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ABSTRACT

This document presents the recommendations of the American Political Science Association for the certification of teachers of government, politics, and civics in secondary schools. For teachers of secondary school civics and government courses, notably American government and comparative government, courses are recommended in political science and cognate disciplines. A major in political science is recommended because it includes courses on democratic theory, constitutional democracy, and political institutions' processes that are the core of pre-college instruction on civics and government. The subjects and skills of a political science major are compatible with a broader social sciences or social studies perspective. As a discipline, political science encompasses methods of inquiry of the cognate social science disciplines and encourages its majors to elect courses in these disciplines. For the future teacher, historical analysis is a valuable tool for political science courses and for a minor. While a major is recommended, the prospective teacher should have at least a minor in political science, but a major or equivalent credit hours in political science is preferable. Primary courses should include introduction to American Government and Politics, Introduction to Comparative Government and Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. Advanced courses in U.S. government, politics, and public law, including state and local government, comparative politics, and political theory and philosophy are suggested. A total of six courses is recommended from history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Training in instructional strategies should be included. The preparation of elementary school teachers is briefly discussed. (DK)

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Guidelines for the Training and Certification of Pre Collegiate Teachers of Civics, Government, and Social Studies

Recommended by The American Political Science Association 1993

Objectives

When the American Political Science Association held its first annual meeting in 1904, the major presentation was "What Do Entering College Freshmen Know About American Government?" From that time on, the Association has maintained standing committees and projects devoted to pre-collegiate education. This is as it should be: citizenship education is a primary objective of American schooling, and political science is the core subject of civic literacy and competence.

The increasing concern over the competence of teachers and the preparation of students to participate fully and knowledgeably in American society now prompts the APSA to respond to requests for its recommendations regarding the certification of teachers of government, politics and civics in secondary schools. The recognition that education must provide the foundation for students' academic skills and civic competency should also be addressed by recommendations as to the preparation of the elementary and secondary teachers who first introduce the study of American values and institutions.

Audiences: Who May Use These Guidelines

The guidelines have been prepared by the Association's Education Committee in consultation with many other faculty in political science and colleges of education. The guidelines are for reference and use by the following organizations responsible for designing curricula and training and certifying teachers:

- Colleges and universities with programs that certify elementary, middle and high school social studies, civics and government teachers,
- State education agencies that establish standards for certifying or licensing social studies, civics and government teachers,
- Agencies that evaluate and accredit teacher education programs,
- Professional organizations for pre-college teachers, particularly the National Council for the Social Studies, and the regional and state councils for the social studies,

- Organizations that are examining and proposing reforms in pre-collegiate education, and

- Political science departments in colleges and universities who are responsible, wholly or in part, for providing the courses to be taken by teachers seeking certification in the social studies, civics and government.

The Certification of Secondary School Teachers of Civics and Government

For teachers of secondary school civics and government courses, notably American government and comparative government, the following courses are recommended.

Political Science

Teachers of civics and government in particular, and also of social studies, are advised to pursue a major in political science. The undergraduate political science major shares the objective of pre-college civics and social studies instruction, namely "...[T]o maximize students' capacity to analyze and interpret the significance and dynamics of political events and governmental processes ... [t]o equip them for coping with political events and governmental actions and problems in the future. 'Coping with' in this context means not merely to understand, or to manage their effects on society and on them individually, but also to evaluate and seek to shape them."*

The political science major includes courses on democratic theory, constitutional democracy, and political institutions' processes that are the core of pre-college instruction on civics and government. Moreover, the subjects and skills of a political science major are compatible with a broader social sciences/social studies perspective. As a discipline, political science encompasses methods of inquiry of the cognate social science disciplines and encourages its majors to elect courses in these disciplines. For the future teacher, historical analyses is a valuable tool for political science courses and for a minor. A pre-service teacher majoring in political science who minors in history should be qualified to teach history as well as civics and government.

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*For a full description of the objectives and attributes of the political science major, see John C. Wahlke, "Liberal Learning and the Political Science Major," PS: Political Science & Politics, 24 (March, 1991), pp. 48-60. (Available from APSA upon request: (202) 483-2512.)

Political science students study American government as well as comparative, multicultural, and international perspectives on political life. Their training emphasizes mastery of written and oral communications skills and analytical skills which pre-college teachers of civics and social studies recognize as fundamental to their instructional objectives.

While a major is recommended, the prospective teacher should have at least a minor in political science, but a major or the following equivalent credit hours in political science is preferable. The distribution of courses should include Introductory American Government, assure exposure to major subfields in political science, and provide some study in depth in American politics and comparative politics through advanced courses.

Primary Courses

Introduction to American Government and Politics	1 - 2 semesters
Introduction to Comparative Government and Politics	1 semester
International Relations	1 semester
Political Theory	1 semester

Recommended Courses

Advanced courses in American government and politics and public law, including state and local government	2 - 3 semesters (for a total of 4 semesters in American government and politics, including the introductory course)
Courses in comparative politics**	2 semesters
Political Theory/Philosophy	1 - 2 semesters

Cognate Disciplines

Many middle and high school teachers of civics and government will be responsible for teaching courses in history and/or the other social sciences, particularly economics. To prepare them to do so, a total of six courses from the following disciplines are recommended: history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. The courses selected should be taken from at least three of the disciplines, and

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**This should include developing and non-western countries in addition to more familiar Western European nations.

should include at least two semesters in history and one in economics.

Professional Education/Teacher Training

Secondary school civics, government and social studies teachers should receive training in instructional strategies and practices and in the application of these strategies to the presentation of specific subjects in government and politics.

Preparation of Elementary School Teachers

Citizenship education is an important component of elementary education. Our very youngest students receive their first formal instruction in democratic values, cooperation and participation in their school and community. Early schooling should introduce young students to the norms of American constitutional order and to the ways in which participation in American democracy has been expanded.

Students in the upper primary grades receive their first instruction in American history and the foundations of American democracy and in their state's history and government. Political science training will give elementary teachers the concepts and context needed to introduce these topics.

Elementary school teachers are advised to take at least two semesters of political science, but four semesters are preferable. At least one semester of American Government and Politics should be required, and courses in comparative government and politics and state and local government are recommended.